

## Chapter 5: Vectors of Settlement

By the time Mexican soldiers killed Victorio and his followers in the mountains of northern Mexico in October 1880, the Guadalupe Mountains and the trans-Pecos region had already acquired a new sedentary population. An increasing number of Anglo-American and Hispano settlers lived within the boundaries of the Mescalero homeland. To the west, the fertile Mesilla valley had long been a stronghold of Hispano livestock farmers, some of whom grazed animals in the various mountain ranges during the summers; later they explored opportunities to ranch or farm in the region. Finding land expensive and rare along the Rio Grande, still more sought to try their hand at ranching or farming outside the confines of the fertile valley. Others trickled south from Las Vegas, New Mexico, and the Mora area, initially trailing sheep and sometimes a few cows. Some settled along the rivers and streams that passed through the region. Few in the trans-Pecos expected to find wealth in agriculture; only the most savvy, creative, and entrepreneurial stood a chance at achieving such a goal even in the lucrative industry of ranching during its military-supported heyday in the 1860s and 1870s.

Other opportunities drew Anglo-Americans to the trans-Pecos. To the north of the Guadalupe Mountains, the two military forts — Stanton and Sumner — became magnets for people who sought to provide the Army with the commodities it needed to feed, clothe, and shelter soldiers and to fill its obligations to reservation Indians. Competition for such contracts provided one of the many smouldering problems that played a part in initiating the Lincoln County War of 1878. Although only a few people lived between the salt flats west of the Guadalupe Mountains and the Rio Grande, many regional people, especially Hispanos, used this valuable mineral resource. Communities began to develop along the Pecos watershed as well, spurred by Pecos, Texas, and its notorious jurist, the roguish Judge Roy Bean who administered, in the famous phrase, “law west of the Pecos.”<sup>1</sup> Only after Victorio’s death could settlers anticipate security. As long as Victorio and others like him roamed free, settlement in any area they could reach remained a chancy proposition.

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<sup>1</sup> Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 370-75; Jack Skiles, *Judge Roy Bean Country* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1996); Delmar Hayter, “The Early Economic Development of the Pecos River Valley of New Mexico and Texas, 1880-1900,” *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* Vol. 62 (1986): 69-85

Although the Army helped open the area to new Anglo-American settlement, population in the Guadalupe Mountains and the rest of the trans-Pecos grew slowly. The region was still peripheral to the larger socio-political forces, the railroads, lawyers, and other manifestations of industrial society that drove development elsewhere in New Mexico and Texas. Although some entrepreneurs, particularly the noted cattleman John Chisum, became wildly successful, the region offered too few prospects for many others. Some eked out a living in ranching, agriculture or mining; others looked to sell to the government to survive. Parts of the region remained outside the influence of the forces of modern order that the Army represented. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which guaranteed former Mexican citizens living under U.S. administration all of their former rights, made little or no difference for those living in Hispano towns; Anglo towns where law was a concept but not a reality dominated. The economic and cultural ties that might precipitate social order and the rules of American society were not yet firm. For a series of reasons that cut both to the advantage of people of the region and against them, the trans-Pecos remained with the reach but beyond the grasp of industrial America.

The 1880s ushered in Anglo settlement of the region in a more comprehensive manner than occurred before the end of significant Indian raiding at the start of the decade. Before then, settlers lived on their own, without secure connections to the outside world — especially when Victorio and other raiders roamed the hillsides. These early settlers were isolated, not significantly different from neighboring Indian people in their inability to access a world larger than the trans-Pecos. Idiosyncratic and in some ways throwbacks to the pre-Civil War ethos of pre-capitalist individualism that once permeated the nation, they lacked connections to the Anglo-American world that spawned them, to the sustaining technologies, methods, and values of American culture. Instead, most early settlers, their resources limited to what they could scrape from a harsh and difficult land, survived with their guns in hand.

As always happened as the American nation expanded and secured dominance of an area, its patterns appeared everywhere, pressuring all prior forms of social, cultural, and economic organization. Communities started in southeastern New Mexico — some for obvious reasons, others with no economic justification for their location. No railroad traversed the region until the 1880s. Without one, such communities remained as isolated any pre-industrial predecessors. They were connected, but only by a hard horse or wagon ride to a fort within this remote region or a railroad stop beyond its boundaries. What separated the people who founded communities such as Salt Flat, Pine Springs, Eddy, and Seven Rivers from the others who came before was their sense of mission, articulated in the concept of Manifest Destiny. They internalized a national ethos of achievement as a group that in practice translated into individualism and even self-aggrandizement. To most such settlers, this intellectual trick made little if any difference. They were there, and not only would they survive, they expected to prosper no matter what the obvious limits of their skills, place, and technologies.

This determination to stay in remote places even under adverse conditions helped foster a diverse subregional economy. Throughout most of the nineteenth century's second half, ranching and homesteading served as the basis for this subregional economy, with mining playing

a smaller role and only the onset of widespread irrigation making agriculture possible. These economic activities, including the development of ranches such as the Frijole, Williams, and Seven Rivers, as well as a range of similar economic endeavors, became central to bringing industrial America's institutions to the region. In an oft-described process of colonialism, where dominant culture individuals settled peripheries in hopes of wealth only to find their status diminished as a result of their choices, the trans-Pecos and the Guadalupe Mountains served as a primary example. Despite the will of an expansionist nation and its settlers, the region remained inaccessible and marginal.

Transportation networks and other institutions of Anglo-American culture continued to precipitate further changes. As the resources of Guadalupe Mountains and the trans-Pecos became more important in a changing technological and economic environment and as the machined miracles of the modern age drew ever closer, institutions of American society began to coalesce. In some instances, this precipitated conflict with the Spanish-speaking population of the surrounding area. In others, such relationships illustrated the difficult nature of expansion in unfamiliar topography and biogeography; not only did Americans find terrain that many described as hostile, they had to superimpose their socio-cultural overlays on existing templates of people who may not always have openly resisted, but never quite acquiesced either. The opportunity for widespread cultural misunderstanding and attendant conflict, tension, and ill-will remained great.

Within a very few years, railroads reached the region and the values of American society took precedence over all that came before. In 1881, the first rails reached El Paso from the west; by 1883, four railroads vied for trade in the city, which observers reported was transformed by the economic activity associated with the transportation network of the age.<sup>2</sup> The region experienced the railroad's influence in ever-widening concentric circles, as economic activity from Roswell to the Guadalupe Mountains became different in an effort to conform to the demands of the national market. Instead of thinking of the market in local and regional terms, asking only what the government would buy, ranchers and farmers wondered what their products might bring in the competitive market generated by the railroads. The railroad became a double-edged technology for many on the ranches in hinterlands such as the trans-Pecos. It expanded markets for their products while simultaneously highlighting their remote status, asking stark questions about the nature of prosperity and its distribution in industrial America.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Such questions typified the semiarid West during the late nineteenth century; for more see Richard White, *Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); William E. deBuys, *Enchantment and Exploitation: The Life and Hard Times of a New Mexico Mountain Range* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986); and Hal K. Rothman, *On Rims and Ridges: The Los Alamos Area Since 1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), for examples.

In the period between about 1880 and 1900, the trans-Pecos and the Guadalupe Mountains passed from unconnected remote area to marginal periphery connected by rail to the core of industrial society. Although the Mescaleros and other Indian people in the area had been consigned to reservations, their presence served to accentuate their importance as part of the subregional economy; as elsewhere in the West, government contracts to feed and support them served as the initial basis of Anglo-American economy, reemphasizing the importance of federal support in the process of western development. Especially in peripheral areas, which almost always lacked sufficient indigenous capital to support development, government influence became important and stayed that way. Without it, Anglo-American settlement could not have been sustained.<sup>4</sup>

Federal support was hardly a new concept in the Guadalupe Mountains or the trans-Pecos in 1880. The Army had been the first American presence in the region, as it undertook surveys and built forts, and bought local and regional products. This pre-railroad regime brought settlers in its wake and provided at least a measure of protection for them; the chain of five forts built in the 1850s that culminated in Fort Stanton, and its later and more northern counterpart, Fort Sumner, offered at least the pretense of protection and the illusion of control of the region. In the minds of potential settlers in the late nineteenth century, a consistent military presence meant that order was close at hand.

The Civil War dramatically slowed regional settlement. As Confederate and Northern forces dueled in New Mexico and west Texas, the military's ability to maintain protection diminished. The Union Army experienced great difficulty securing its hold on the region; the Confederates who traversed the region as they sought a southwestern empire paid little attention to local matters. The two armies feinted and grappled as settlers watched with trepidation and often fled for safety. The depopulation of ranches around Fort Stanton after the Confederates abandoned it illustrated the importance of the external presence. Without visible military support, Anglo-American and Hispano habitation outside the Rio Grande corridor remained insecure. As the Civil War escalated, both the Union and the Confederacy left the Guadalupe Mountains and the trans-Pecos to the Mescaleros.

The reestablishment of Union control during 1862 and long-sought national development legislation cleared the way for larger numbers of settlers. The passage of the Homestead Act of 1862 by Congress, an impossibility with the presence of representatives of southern states, held up the yeoman farmer as the pinnacle of achievement of Manifest Destiny and the backbone of the virtuous American republic.<sup>5</sup> Although the passage of this act occurred

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<sup>4</sup> Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991) argues that the West became the kindergarten of the federal state."

<sup>5</sup> Donald J. Pisani, *Water, Land, and Law in the West: The Limits of Public Policy, 1850-1920* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996); Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1944); Paul Wallace Gates, "The Homestead Law in an Incongruous Land System,"

at precisely the moment of a historical turning point, when individual prosperity first stemmed more from owning the means of production than it did from the independence of land ownership, the act encouraged individuals to make parts of the unclaimed West their own. Its immediate impact in the trans-Pecos remained small, but the act added another intellectual vector to the ways in which Americans constructed their identity. In the end, the numbers of settlers grew in the trans-Pecos as much because of ideology as any economic opportunity the region offered.

Although Mescaleros, Lipans, Comanches, and other Native peoples long dominated the trans-Pecos, before and after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo a thin layer of Spanish-speaking people spread across the area. Many Hispanos were part of families that came up the Pecos River in the 1850s as *ciboleros*, buffalo hunters. Others came from Mexico in small clusters during the same time and started agricultural communities along river courses. Some followed the paths opened by the military; the people who abandoned Fort Stanton after the Confederate pullback were largely Hispano, as were those who returned after General Carleton ordered its reestablishment in 1862. Towns, bookended by Tularosa, founded in 1862, and Puerto de Luna, established in 1873, further illustrated the Hispano presence. Even the famed town of Lincoln, location of Billy the Kid's legendary breakout, began in 1868 as a Hispano town called Placitas sporting twelve to fifteen abode flat-roofed houses. Other clearly Hispano towns, such as Las Chosas, the dugouts, on the Bonita River east of La Placita; La Junta, at the junction of the Ruidoso and the Bonita, where the Hondo River began; and Plaza de San Jose, which became Missouri Plaza, were founded in the same era. Atop Indian life lay a pre-Anglo veneer of Hispano culture.<sup>6</sup>

Hispanos predominated in such communities until the end of the 1860s. In Placitas, the Hispanic population practiced agriculture to survive. A few businesses, owned by Hispanos, marked the little community, and to some Anglo observers, a mythic parallel existed between such towns on the economic outskirts of the nation and Taos and Santa Fe during the early 1820s, when Anglo-American trappers and traders first came over the mountains from the north. The parallel was located mostly in the mind's eye of the mythmaker; the resources that catapulted Santa Fe and Taos to preeminent positions in national consciousness did not exist in the trans-Pecos. Lincoln County itself came into existence in 1869, with a predominantly Hispano population, according to the U.S. Census for 1870. One precinct, including the Ruidoso Valley and San Patricio, a tiny village of about fifteen adobes lining one street beside the Ruidoso River north of its junction with the Bonita, typified this overwhelming majority. Of

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*American Historical Review* 41 (July 1936): 652-81.

<sup>6</sup> Katz and Katz, "History of the Carlsbad Basin, Southeastern New Mexico," 44-46; Carole Larson, *Forgotten Frontier: The Story of Southeastern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 68-69; see also Lily Klasner, *My Girlhood Among Outlaws* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972), 54.

the fifty families recorded as living there, forty-three were Hispano and the rest Anglo-American. Its 141 Hispanos far outnumbered the nineteen Anglos. In 1867, two-hundred Hispanics from the Manzano Mountains to the west founded La Plaza de San Jose, which English-speakers called Missouri Plaza, about twenty miles west of Roswell along the Rio Hondo. During the early years of the town, former Confederate officers who ran a store, two English-speaking families, a Frenchman, and a man named John Newcomb comprised the entire non-Hispano population.<sup>7</sup>

Anglo settlement also began, both west and south of Roswell at the northern end of the region and closer to the Guadalupe Mountains. The first Anglo-American settlers came for reasons of their own. Veterans of the Civil War, dislocated individuals, and people who simply did not value the trappings of civilization typified such settlers. Men such as Captain Felix McKittrick, who in 1869 settled in the canyon that now bears his name in what has become Guadalupe Mountains National Park, felt a need to leave the confines of civilization and set out on their own. Others followed McKittrick into the Guadalupe Mountains, which soon showed increasing evidence of an Anglo-American presence. By 1876, the Rader brothers built a two-room house of native stone about 400 feet from Frijole Spring; like the Mescaleros before them, they too required the proximity of water. Although some accounts place a man named Walcott living in a crude dugout at the Frijole Spring in the 1860s, the Raders clearly owned the property; they paid taxes on the land around the spring, following a pattern of codification of settlement that typified Anglo-American settlement throughout the arid parts of the West. The brothers, bachelors, ran cattle, giving way to family called Herring. Elsewhere, Confederate Army veteran John Shattuck, his wife, Julia Lyons Shattuck, and their family settled at the head of Dark Canyon in the lower Guadalupe Mountains in 1885; newlyweds William Ward and his wife started their own spread nearby. This sparse population typified the region; it also had little to bring it together save the needs of nearly nonexistent communities.<sup>8</sup>

Anglo-American settlement even in this periphery followed predictable patterns. The first to settle were loners such as McKittrick, people committed to one ideal or another who found the remoteness they experienced enticing rather than threatening, or individual ranch families such as the Shattucks. Often they were the first sedentary Anglo-Americans in the region; outlaws — in this area cattle rustlers — preceded organized settlement of any kind and while such miscreants saved most of their menace for cattlemen and rarely preyed upon homesteaders in the trans-Pecos, legitimate residents and their less law-abiding neighbors had to coexist. Besides the Army, they were the only Anglo-Americans living in the region.

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<sup>7</sup> Katz and Katz, "History of the Carlsbad Basin, Southeastern New Mexico," 45; Klasner, *My Girlhood Among Outlaws*, 38; Utley, *Billy the Kid*, 38; Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Peggy S. Froeschauer, *Cultural Landscape Report for the Frijole Ranch, Guadalupe Mountains National Park* (Santa Fe: National Park Service, 1995), 14-16; n.a., *Eddy County, New Mexico, to 1881* (Lubbock, Texas: Southeastern New Mexico Historical Society, 1982), 16.

Anglo capital also contributed to the presence of Hispano herders in the area, a form of political and economic control that presaged the dominance that stemmed from Anglo-American settlement. Sheep herders from El Paso and San Elizario grazed flocks in the trans-Pecos; they were soon replaced by the herdsman of larger and sometimes distant Anglo concerns. Until this point, the small towns of the trans-Pecos functioned autonomously; rarely did political, social, and cultural concerns outside the region affect local life. The military remained the dominant representation of mainstream American culture in the area, and its intermittent successes before 1869 reflected the value of national institutions on this periphery. As cattle operations became more important in the region, a kind of class structure solidified. Although Hispanos made up a majority of the non-Indian regional population into the 1870s, their power diminished as outside Anglo money, handled through the growing number of Anglo commercial interests in the region, altered the balance of economic power.<sup>9</sup>

The new arrangement quickly became apparent in the changing distribution of the region's political and economic power. As cattle ranching became the dominant industry in the trans-Pecos and a leading source of strife, new forces exerted their influences on the region. As did most incoming industries, ranching shifted the balance of power away from the status quo and toward those with the largest number of cattle and pockets sufficiently deep to sustain a business during bad years. In many of the small communities that Hispanos merchants served, Anglo economic concerns — often aided by their Anglo-American background, and their ability to speak English and to sell commodities to the Army — first challenged and then overwhelmed Hispano merchants. Placitas, which in an instructive name change became Lincoln in 1872, offered a prime example. Although Hispano merchants were successful during the town's early years and the regional population remained predominantly Spanish-speaking, by the time of the Lincoln County War in 1878, not one but two Anglo commercial houses vied for the dominant position in the cattle trade, as well as in local and regional economic endeavors such as banking.<sup>10</sup> The Lincoln County rivalry between James G. Dolan and his "House of Murphy" and the forces of John Henry Tunstall and Alexander McSween that has been the subject of much myth-making also entailed another transformation. Both economic endeavors replaced Hispano concerns that lacked the access to capital and to markets that Anglo commercial entrepreneurs enjoyed. These new businessmen became new layers placed economically atop the Hispano base of Placitas-turned-Lincoln.

Political transformations followed economic ones. Predominantly Hispano towns fell by

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<sup>9</sup> Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 69; F. Stanley, *The Seven Rivers, New Mexico Story* (Pep, Texas: no publisher, June 11, 1963), 2-3; for more on the process of *partidario*, a Spanish practice of running sheep on shares much like sharecropping in the South that Anglo-Americans throughout New Mexico coopted, see deBuys, *Enchantment and Exploitation* and Rothman, *On Rims and Ridge*.

<sup>10</sup> Uteley, *Billy the Kid*, 17-35; Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 112; Joel K. Jacobsen, "An Excess of Law in Lincoln County: Thomas Catron, Samuel Axtell, and the Lincoln County War," *New Mexico Historical Review* 68, n. 2 (April 1993): 133-152.

the wayside as larger sources of outside capital and their predilection for ordering economic activity created new centers of wealth that superseded existing communities. Anglo-Americans took political offices previously held by Hispanos, sometimes by catering to the anti-Mexican prejudices of their Anglo-American neighbors. Economic vectors promoted some newer communities over existing ones. Well before 1900, Roswell wrested a leading role in regional commerce away from Lincoln. In 1889, Roswell became the seat of the new Chaves County, taking political importance from Lincoln County and the town of Lincoln as a sign of its growing economic position. One of fourteen new counties in New Mexico created from existing ones between 1880 and 1910, Chaves County came to dominate the southeastern portion of the territory. Lincoln lost further ground when the county seat it held moved to Carrizozo in one of New Mexico's innumerable late nineteenth-century boundary changes. Roswell became the economic center of the region as well as an important political center and Carrizozo enjoyed new status derived from a growing role in politics. Lincoln lost its political and economic position and soon withered.<sup>11</sup>

The increasing solidification of power and wealth in a few hands contributed to the region's growing lawlessness. The colonial nature of the regional economy inspired not only Indian and Hispano resistance, but some by Anglo-Americans as well. After 1880, most Indians were confined to reservations; their difficulties had become separate from those of the rest of the population. Hispanos remained sufficiently numerous and important — tied by kinship and long-term interaction to the dominant Anglo community — to maintain a significant position in regional affairs, but with each passing year, Hispano power and status in an area soon called "Little Texas" diminished. For Anglo-Americans, the region became an outlaw's paradise. Many of the first Anglos to settle there were former and sometimes unreconstructed Confederates, often unwilling to pay more than lip service to American law. The environmental characteristics of the area promoted crime; the trans-Pecos contained a rustler's dream: open country; deep mountain canyons, often with springs, in which to hide; little infrastructure in the form of roads or marshals; and thousands of generally unattended animals. Typical self-interest guided resistance to the coalescing power structure, as poorer Anglos watched the prosperity of others in their midst with envy and sought to shave a piece of it for themselves. The abundance of herds enticed a wild element, and with few scruples on the part of many cattle buyers, rustling became a common practice. As happened around the world, from Tasmania to the Cape Province of South Africa, individuals from the dominant culture who failed to share in colonial prosperity sought their own extralegal paths to wealth and status.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 69, 204; Utey, *Billy the Kid*, 37; Jerry Williams, *New Mexico in Maps*.

<sup>12</sup> Urs Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict: Encounters Between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1988); Noël Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992); Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*.

The locus of much of the rustling that passed as individualism originated in the community of Seven Rivers. Founded in 1867 by Dick Reed, who started a trading post there, it soon became a haven for the outlaws who sought to prey on the successful John Chisum and his more than 80,000 head of cattle. In the time-honored New Mexico tradition, Chisum dominated lush grasslands that were not his own; these public domain lands were free for the claiming, but Chisum's men treated anyone who tried as an interloper. A native of Tennessee, Chisum entered the cattle business in Denton County, Texas, in the 1850s; after the Civil War began, he became a supplier of beef to the Confederacy, in 1863 moving his operation west to the confluence of the Concho and Colorado rivers in Coleman County. In 1867, he brought 600 head of cattle to Fort Sumner. He found the area attractive and after engaging in a partnership with Charles Goodnight, Chisum established himself at the Bosque Grande in 1872. Chisum ran as much 20,000 cows that first, and his herd quadrupled in his first years in New Mexico. He required more grazing land in each successive year. Despite Chisum's lack of personal pretension, he appeared to later arrivals to be preserving his position on federal land at their expense. In response, a loosely knit group of small ranchers who followed the Pecos River north built herds out of Chisum's "strays." A class-, wealth-, and priority-based war began as a series of small, personal skirmishes. Reed's trading post became the center of a network of anti-Chisum people who settled in a fifteen- to twenty-mile radius around the confluence of the seven springs that gave the locale its name.<sup>13</sup>

Hugh Beckwith, a soft-spoken Englishman, became the leader and the spokesman for order among a loosely affiliated band that did not routinely obey American law. Beckwith came to the region as one of Chisum's cowhands and eventually became the cattleman's most outspoken adversary. The Englishman married Refugia Pino, the daughter of one of the Hispanic families in the area, giving him a larger stake in some form of order than many of the newcomers, mostly Texans, who arrived with dreams of wealth and little thought of putting down roots. When such men sought to divest Hispanos of their land on the typical late nineteenth century pretext that no clear title to the property existed, Beckwith stood in their way. In most accounts, he earned a reputation for decency and fairness.<sup>14</sup>

Preserving this in-between status of outright opponent of the powers in the region but principled and moral leader within the context of the so-called outlaw community proved a

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<sup>13</sup> Utley, *Billy the Kid*, 19-20; n.a., *Eddy County New Mexico to 1891*, 22; Stanley, *The Seven Rivers, New Mexico Story*, 2; Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 19-24, gives 1873 as the date for the founding of the trading post at Seven Rivers; she spells the founder's name "Dick Reid."

<sup>14</sup> Stanley, *the Seven Rivers, New Mexico, Story*, 3-4; Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 24; the pattern of intermarriage between Anglo men and Hispanas typified the region. Even Sheriff Pat Garrett, the man who effectively supported the coalescing of American institutions, was married to a Hispana. Later generations frowned on such intermarriage, especially when relationships involved non-white men and white women. Yet before the firm establishment of dominant culture, such relationships predominated. See West, *The Way to the West* and White, *The Middle Ground*, for countless examples.

complicated and difficult task for Beckwith. Changing rules about land during the 1870s allowed some cattlemen to secure the use of large areas of valuable range land for a few years without even filing for title or otherwise complying with public domain law; it also gave them *de facto* power to exclude others. Chisum, perhaps the leading southwestern rancher of the day, was one of the major beneficiaries of the changes in law. Between 1867 and 1875, his herd grew from roughly 1,000 head to more than 80,000.<sup>15</sup> The amount of grass this widely scattered herd consumed impinged upon almost every other rancher, Anglo or Hispano, in the trans-Pecos. In a repeat of the very issues that divided the nation and caused the Civil War, state's rights individuals asserted their claims against the growing power of corporate America and its many offshoots. Beckwith and others like him chafed at the growing consolidation of power and wealth.

Southeastern New Mexico remained a rough place in the 1870s, and Beckwith and his family became embroiled in its turmoil. Chisum harbored no love for the Seven Rivers cowboys, whom he routinely claimed rustled his cattle. Nor did he like Dolan, instead favoring Tunstall and McSween in the brewing Lincoln County War. Chisum's presence on that side pushed Beckwith's Seven Rivers group toward the Murphy-Dolan alliance. Only Hugh Beckwith tried to persuade the young men to stay neutral. One son, Robert Beckwith, who served as the postmaster of Seven Rivers, disregarded his father's counsel and took the Murphy-Dolan side. In the famous Five-Day Battle for McSween's house in Lincoln, the younger Beckwith, serving as a deputy sheriff tainted by his obvious allegiance to the Murphy-Dolan side, was killed while attempting to serve a warrant on McSween during the middle of the battle. Later Hugh Beckwith and his son-in-law, who Beckwith blamed for the deaths of his two sons, drew on each other in a heated dispute. Beckwith killed him and was severely wounded himself. The Lincoln County War, which had been an intellectual disagreement, became a hybrid economic and cultural dispute as well as a blood feud that in the end required the intervention of federal troops.<sup>16</sup>

Inter-ethnic conflict took many forms. The continuing disenfranchisement of Hispanos in the trans-Pecos and the subsequent elimination of knowledge of their substantive role in shaping the region took time. As did such situations across the West, the battle between incoming Anglo-Americans and resident Hispanos centered on perceptions of law and custom. The new arrivals believed that American law, the law of the nation that invented the idea of Manifest Destiny, always held sway. When permitted to argue in their defense, Hispanos pointed to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as the legal rationale for their patterns of ownership, which

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<sup>15</sup> Harwood P. Hinton, Jr., "John Simpson Chisum, 1877-1884," *New Mexico Historical Review* 31 3 (July 1956), 187-89; Sandoz, *The Cattlemen*, 226; Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 108-11; Katz and Katz, "The History of the Carlsbad Basin, Southeastern New Mexico," 46-48.

<sup>16</sup> Utey, *Billy the Kid*, 58, 97-99, 134; Stanley, *The Seven Rivers, New Mexico Story*, 4-6; Hinton, "John Simpson Chisum," 191-93.

typically relied on a relatively vague descriptive grant from the King of Spain, the Viceroy of Mexico, or the Republic of Mexico. In the late nineteenth century, American law often regarded Spanish and Mexican land grants as holding lesser validity than later American homestead claims. The result was a situation in which Hispanos from California to New Mexico lost their land to squatters, speculators, and even to the lawyers who defended them. Often Hispanos understood neither laws of American society nor the language in which such proceedings took place. Extralegal action by Anglo-Americans compounded even this enormous problem, as Hispanos were intimidated away from their property or consigned to the worst areas of a region while Anglo-Americans occupied the choice river basins and best ranges.<sup>17</sup>

One of the clearest illustrations of the changing nature of law and community relations took place on the gypsum and salt flats to the west of the Guadalupe Mountains. The Salt War of 1877 typified the difficulties that accompanied the change in jurisdiction and the transfer from custom to law. A group of saline lakes about 110 miles east of El Paso had been the source of salt for Mexican people on both sides of the Rio Grande for generations. People pushed handcarts across the sparse flats and rugged mountains of west Texas, always an arduous trip, collected the salt, and returned to the Rio Grande area to market their acquisition. Several villages in the El Paso area, including Ysleta, San Elizario, and Socorro, depended on the trade for sustenance. In 1877, after a number of attempts by Texas interests to privatize the resource, Judge Charles Howard, who had previously promised to protect free access to the salt beds, claimed them for himself and instituted a fee for collecting salt. In an instant, a resource that had been by custom a public commodity became private. An uproar that led to violence ensued. Mexicans organized to defend their access, while a company of volunteer rangers attempted to enforce Howard's decree. In a series of battles, Howard, a priest who spoke for the salt collectors, and three of the Anglo-American volunteer rangers were killed and a number were taken prisoner. Eventually, federal troops arrived to end the violence, a U.S. Army commission arrived to investigate, and the government reestablished Fort Bliss in El Paso to keep the peace.<sup>18</sup>

This cross-cultural conflict typified many patterns in the American West. As U.S. institutions coalesced in the region, the rules of Spanish and Mexican society were superseded by American law. This foreshadowed changing legal status and use of resources, as well as the sort of ad hoc chicanery in which Howard engaged. Such behavior typified Anglo-American expansion, taking place in Texas, California, and New Mexico as well as on Indian lands

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<sup>17</sup> Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964); deBuys, *Enchantment and Exploitation*, 171-92; Rothman, *On Rims and Ridges*, ; Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), describes the general terrain in New Mexico.

<sup>18</sup> García, *Desert Immigrants*, 156-57; David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); C. L. Sonnichsen, *The El Paso Salt War* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1961).

throughout the West. In many ways, this laying down of an Anglo-American cultural overlay signified the consolidation of new power everywhere it appeared. It indicated that one older cooperative regime closed, and another, in which Anglo-Americans dominated by law and sometimes force, had begun.<sup>19</sup> With the Salt War of 1877, the remote periphery of the Trans-Pecos region started to become typical.

The arrival of rail lines in the region secured the new order and replaced any remaining vestiges of a less-organized past. Railroads first reached El Paso in 1881, giving the little city on the banks of the Rio Grande a chance at being the first great southwestern city. By 1883, four railroads — the Southern Pacific; the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe; the Texas and Pacific; and the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio — served the city; the following year, the Mexican Central's track reached the international border, and El Paso became a truly important junction.<sup>20</sup> It also pulled the surrounding hinterlands around it on both sides of the border more firmly into industrial capitalism's web.

While the railroad to El Paso offered people in the Guadalupe Mountains and throughout the trans-Pecos region an opportunity to participate more widely in commerce, it also remained brutally distant — out of reach but not out of sight. Throughout the 1880s, the significance of the new transportation technology, still 100 miles distant over the old roads and trails, grew, but it remained a frustrating force on the horizon to visionaries in the trans-Pecos. Local and regional outlets still provided most of the capital in the region; ranching and mining, while often successful, were still limited by the enormous difficulties in reaching the El Paso rail yards. As a result, the prices that products brought remained governed by a local and regional scale and not by their more lucrative national counterparts.

Nor was the trans-Pecos a freestanding region. El Paso increasingly counted its east, including the Guadalupe Mountains, within its economic sphere, while northern areas of the region such as Lincoln and Roswell looked to Las Vegas, Mora, and Pecos as its models. Despite barbed wire fencing and other technological advantages that cut across the range, the llano remained open as hooves of grazing animals passed across it, and the geographic center of the trans-Pecos — the area around Seven Rivers — remained the province of outlaws, renegades, and the cows they coveted. Although the Pecos River provided a geographic center as it wound its way through the heart of the area, no economic, political, or cultural core to match yet existed. Pulled by different forces in a range of directions, the Guadalupe Mountains

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<sup>19</sup> Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict*, ; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>20</sup> García, *Desert Immigrants*, 14-15; Sam Truett, "Neighbors by Nature: Rethinking Environmental History in the US-Mexico Borderlands," *Environmental History* 2 2 (April 1997), ; offers an example of this process; S.G. Reed, *A History of the Texas Railroads*, NY: Arno Press, 1981: 356-364; Rosa Lee Wylie, "The Coming of the Railroad in Culberson County," *The Permian Historical Annual* XXI (December 1981): 115-116.

and the trans-Pecos area remained a hinterland, largely devoid of any intrinsic identity.<sup>21</sup>

Some saw a future in the area as a place that could be persuaded to bloom with the application of modern technologies. An ambitious Confederate veteran, Joseph C. Lea, stood among the first. In 1877, he purchased the town of Roswell from a colorful raconteur, Van C. Smith, who started the remote community to keep himself from the temptation of gambling in settled places. Smith founded the town as Rio Hondo in 1869, renaming it “Roswell” in 1873 after his father. Lea became one of a very few local leaders who recognized that the future of the middle Pecos Valley depended on the expansion of its agricultural and ranching productivity. He was a dynamo who wholeheartedly believed in the future, without any hint of fear that its resources might not sustain cash-crop farming and ranching. Lea promoted the region with vigor and zest, persuading passers-by that no area offered them the opportunity that they would find around Roswell. He and others like him eschewed the casual violence that had become standard in the area, for it projected a counterproductive image of southeastern New Mexico — their home and the place they chose to make their fortune. At great economic and social cost and ultimately lesser political expense, Lea remained neutral throughout the Lincoln County War, advocating through his actions social order ahead of any other value.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1880s, this stance helped Lea emerge as one of the region’s most influential people. He recognized the coming opportunities even before they reached the horizons of his neighbors’ understanding; this foresight encouraged others to follow his lead as the pace of development accelerated through the 1880s. Lea also recognized the political consequences of growth and the competition between communities both for economic advantage and for the position as county seat or the location of other government offices. Such a siting offered an economic baseline that could help sustain a community through lean years. From his seat in the territorial House of Representatives, to which he was elected in 1888, and with help from other regional leaders, Lea engineered the creation of Chaves County with Roswell as its seat in 1889.<sup>23</sup>

The battle to create Chaves County linked Lea to others who supported his goals. Two of these were a former sheriff, Pat Garrett, who enjoyed the distinction of killing Billy the Kid, and the sheriff partner’s in an irrigation project, Charles B. Eddy. Originally from New York, Eddy came to New Mexico after he and a brother acquired two cattle ranches in Colorado and made them profitable. Enthusiastic, talkative, well off, and clearly a success, Eddy acquired huge tracts of land in southeastern New Mexico, in some instances by manipulating the Desert Land Act, passed in 1877 to encourage irrigation by offering 640 acres of public land with the

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<sup>21</sup> Tom Sheridan, *The Bitter River: A Brief Historical Survey of the Middle Pecos River Basin*, Bureau of Land Management, Roswell District Office, Roswell, N.M.: August 1975.

<sup>22</sup> Uteley, *Billy the Kid*, 19-20; Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 195-200.

<sup>23</sup> Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 200-05.

title conditional on irrigation improvements. Garrett was already a national celebrity from his encounter and subsequent book about Billy the Kid. He and Eddy became instrumental in the process of securing the votes for a new county. Eddy received a form of regional acceptance and legitimation when the newly created county, which included much of the middle and lower Pecos River valleys, was named for him.<sup>24</sup>

Irrigation was essential to any kind of Anglo-American settlement in southeastern New Mexico and individual efforts preceded organized commercial irrigation. Most of this was small scale, accomplished by Hispano and Anglo settlers alike. The skills and techniques came from every direction; from the Purgatoire River in southern Colorado, up the Rio Grande from Mexico and San Antonio, and later, from the Mormon example in Utah and from the returning veterans of the California Gold Rush, who showed their practices as they passed through headed east. Near Roswell in 1868, an irrigation system began on the Hondo River; ranchers such as Chisum followed soon after. Most of these were small-scale operations designed for one purpose, but a few lasted. The most impressive was a system built by Henry Harrison at Rattlesnake Springs. It became the longest continually operating irrigation system in Anglo-American New Mexico.<sup>25</sup>

By the time they met Lea, Garrett and Eddy had become the biggest proponents of large-scale irrigation in the region. Eddy had a genuine interest in irrigation and Garrett enjoyed connections and even notoriety that resulted from his role in the Lincoln County War. Along with investors, they founded the Pecos Valley Irrigation Company in 1884, which developed a large ditch east of the Pecos River to Charles Eddy's ranch, located between Seven Rivers and the location of the modern town of Carlsbad. In 1886, after as many as thirty-five percent of southwestern cattle died as a result of a prolonged drought and a shortage of forage brought on by long-term overgrazing, Eddy recognized the region's future lay in agriculture and not ranching. Tales of the success of California irrigation played a role in persuading him of the viability of expanding the amount of land he irrigated; from the Imperial Valley through the Central Valley in the Golden State, irrigated agriculture had become a way of life. In 1887, with financing from the son of a family friend and the president of Chemical Bank in New York, Eddy constructed an irrigation canal to some of his company's land near La Huerta, north of Carlsbad. The initial endeavor was a success, changing the vision both local people and outside investors held of the Pecos River Valley.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 204; Mark Hufstetler and Lon Johnson, *Watering the Land: The Turbulent History of the Carlsbad Irrigation District* (Denver: National Park Service, 1993), 12-14; Steve Bogener, *The Carlsbad Project* (second draft), Bureau of Reclamation History Program (Denver, CO: Research of Historic Reclamation Projects, 1993).

<sup>25</sup> Delmar Hayter, "The Early Economic Development of the Pecos River Valley of New Mexico and Texas, 1880-1990," *West Texas Historical Yearbook* 67 (1986): 69-85; Katz and Katz, "History of the Carlsbad Basin, Southeastern New Mexico," 46-61.

<sup>26</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 14-17; Larson, *Forgotten Frontier*, 158-60, 204; for

Irrigation became one of the technological catalysts of transformation, followed by the railroad that made it possible to move the produce that resulted from broader distribution of water to markets elsewhere. Flushed with success, Eddy, his brother John, and their partners and friends incorporated the Pecos Valley Land and Ditch Company in 1887. They planned three major canal systems, one each east and west of the river in the lower Pecos Valley, the third near Garrett's land in the Roswell area. When completely implemented, the project would provide water for crops on most of the land in the middle and lower Pecos valleys.<sup>27</sup>

As did many such investors in the late nineteenth century West, the men who formed the Pecos Valley Land and Ditch Company possessed dreams that far exceeded the reach of their pocketbooks. Despite the wealth of some of the project leaders as well as their access to investors, most conceived of the Pecos Valley irrigation as a small-scale endeavor. With only \$40,000 in capitalization, the new company was tiny; it lacked the resources to build on the scale its leaders planned. Construction began on only one of the proposed canals; called the Halagueno Ditch, it merely expanded Eddy's existing canal near La Huerta. The funds ran short, and in this incarnation, Eddy and Garrett's company accomplished only a little of its planned work.<sup>28</sup>

Available money and the scope of their dreams seemed to be the only obstacles to success. In 1888, Eddy raised the stakes, offering a much larger irrigation project for the Pecos Valley. The newly renamed outfit, the Pecos Irrigation and Investment Company, included a new source of funds, Robert Weems Tansill, who made his fortune in five-cent cigars in Chicago, and an extraordinary promoter, Charles W. Greene, a booster, newspaperman, and the publisher of Pat Garrett's memoirs about Billy the Kid. Together the newcomers offered the capital and managerial, promotional, and organizational skills the original proponents lacked. By 1889, the company enjoyed substantial capitalization; its coffers held more than \$600,000 and Greene traveled the country, selling another \$400,000 in Pecos Irrigation and Investment Company mortgage bonds to the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank of Chicago.<sup>29</sup> The new

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California irrigation, see Donald J. Pisani, *From the Family Farm to Agribusiness: The Irrigation Crusade in California and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Donald J. Pisani, *To Reclaim a Divided West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), and Norris Hundley *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770s-1990s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 16-17; Susana R. Katz and Paul Katz, *The History of the Carlsbad Basin, Southeastern New Mexico*. Bureau of Reclamation, Southwest Regional Office, Contract No. 3-CS-57-01690: 55-60.

<sup>28</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 16; Lee C. Myers, ed. *The Pearl of the Pecos: The story of the establishment of Eddy, New Mexico and irrigation on the lower Pecos River of New Mexico*, Compiled from Eddy newspapers between October 12, 1889 and October 23, 1897 [cq]. Privately published, Carlsbad, New Mexico: 8-25.

<sup>29</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 16-17.

backers provided the capital necessary to build the irrigation apparatus. Tansill also brought in another backer, James J. Hagerman, a wealthy Colorado Springs railroad builder and investor, whose instincts were aroused as he heard of the possibilities of the Pecos Valley.<sup>30</sup>

Hagerman typified the entrepreneurial spirit of the age. Hard-driving and a little bit reckless, he made his fortune in Milwaukee in iron foundries and in iron ore mines of the Great Lakes region. He retired to Colorado Springs, but soon became enmeshed in the burgeoning silver mining industry there. Hagerman contributed to the building of the Colorado Midland Railroad and invested widely in area silver mines. His portfolio included a substantial percentage of the profits from the famed and wildly lucrative Mollie Gibson mine in Cripple Creek, Colorado. Although Tansill and Eddy perceived Hagerman simply as an “angel,” an investor with vast resources who alone could support the irrigation project, Hagerman remained a hands-on operator and soon became the driving force — not only in the irrigation company, but in the development of the entire middle and lower Pecos River Valley as well.<sup>31</sup>

The irrigation project in the Pecos Valley began to show all the traits of typical colonial economic enterprises. The project began with interested settlers who offered a vision that led to prosperity and growth, an economic and social template that reflected their roots in the national mainstream to lay upon a regional landscape that up to that time had not been harnessed for the wider industrial economy. These initial investors risked their own funds on a small-scale project, soon realizing that they lacked the resources to build a project that matched their dreams, and that not incidentally, offered the status and profits they sought. Recruiting money through connections to the core of industrial society, they found investors whose resources and reach far exceeded their own. Within a short period, these new investors assumed control and implemented projects on a larger scale than the people of the region could conceive; they also added another overlay to the scene, one conditioned and driven from the outside that took greater notice of needs beyond the region than within it. The initiators of the project found themselves scrambling to use their local standing to maintain status, power, and a chance at the wealth the new project might offer as the decisions increasingly came from people who sat behind long and wide oak burl desks far away.

As his partners raised money, Eddy looked toward future growth of the region. In 1888, he platted a townsite near his Halagueno ditch in hopes of capitalizing on the planned reclamation project. Located near the center of the area to be irrigated, the townsite, which soon became called “Eddy” after its founder, seemed the likely center for a subregional economy as irrigation filled its valleys and its coffers with expected wealth.<sup>32</sup> Again, in a pattern

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<sup>30</sup>Percy Hagerman, *James John Hagerman: A Sketch of his Life By His Son Percy Hagerman*, The Texas Historical Survey, Student F.E.R.A. Project, 1935. Sponsored by the University of Texas.

<sup>31</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 17-18.

<sup>32</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 20-21.

that typified development in the arid regions of the United States, the plans preceded not only the arrival of the residents who would live there, but also the economic system that would entice them there in the first place.

The development program moved forward. In 1889, with funds raised through Tansill and Greene, the company constructed its first canals. By March 1889, when Ralph Tarr of the U.S. Reclamation Service visited the region to initiate a field survey mandated by law, the Northern Canal, which started at a diversion dam on Pat Garrett's property near Roswell and ran almost forty miles, neared completion. The Eddy projects had begun as well, with crews planning the first canals that were supposed to extend more than forty miles to the Texas border and irrigate as much as 125,000 acres. A diversion dam, a system of canals, and a large wooden flume that would carry the water across the river before sending it down toward Texas, were all planned.<sup>33</sup> By the standards of the trans-Pecos in 1890, this was an enormous project.

Hagerman integrated the project with another major infrastructural development of his own, the railroad he financed that ran through the Pecos Valley. In 1890, he incorporated the Pecos Valley Railroad Company and planned tracks that would reach from the Texas & Pacific line that passed through Pecos, Texas, on its way to El Paso, north to Roswell. In this most crucial of developmental steps, Hagerman provided the internal infrastructure necessary to deliver the fruits of irrigation to the outside world. As one of the two predominant technological innovations in the area, the railroad opened new options for the entire region. When the rail lines reached Eddy in February 1891, it increased the value both of land and the water from the irrigation projects. At Roswell, where trains first arrived in 1894, railroads completed the process of linking the Pecos Valley to the outside world to its south.<sup>34</sup>

Hagerman built his railroad from south to north, both a symbolic and post-Civil War irony in the context of American Western expansion. Instead of looking to the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe, 160 miles to the north along a route roughly following the path of the old Santa Fe Trail, he linked to the southern route from San Antonio to El Paso and onto California. Inexplicably, Hagerman, who hailed from Canada and the Midwest, bypassed the opportunity to connect to industrial America and instead became linked to the agrarian South, the semiarid Southwest, and the as-yet largely undeveloped southern California area. He may have expected more rapid growth in the Southwest and West. While the decision provided the people of the Pecos Valley with two directions — west and south — in which their produce could easily travel, it also added to the region's anomalous nature. At precisely the moment the greatest

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<sup>33</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 24-25; Ralph S. Tarr, *Reconnaissance of the Guadalupe Mountains* (Austin, TX: Geological Survey of Texas, 1892).

<sup>34</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 32-33; Delmar Hayter, "The Early Development of the Pecos River Valley of New Mexico and Texas, 1880-1900" *West Texas Historical Yearbook* 62 (1986), 69-85; n.a., *Eddy County New Mexico to 1891*, 24; Elvis E. Fleming, "J.J. Hagerman and the Pecos River Railroad," *Permian Historical Annual* XIII (December 1973): 21-35.

vectors of expansion pushed through the northern plains, an economic leader with ties to that process selected a less-direct connection for his latest project.

The combination of the irrigation project and Hagerman's railroad changed the tenor of life in the Pecos Valley. These outside developers — Hagerman, Eddy, and the others — brought the systems of industrial America along with the technologies they sponsored. A significant amount of money had been invested in the Pecos Valley, and its newly proclaimed leaders, who bankrolled the region, expected their investment to pay off. After generations of being a periphery, the Pecos Valley had been linked to the core in such a way that local idiosyncracies such as the grappling for economic control that characterized the Lincoln County War became undesirable and regional patterns increasingly came to mirror the mainstream values of American society as closely as could be accomplished along a spur railroad that connected to a trunk line on a periphery.

The railroad and irrigation systems radically changed the economy of scale in the trans-Pecos. Prior to 1890, the main economic endeavor had been stock-raising, and for most of the Anglo-American history of the region, the animals had been sold locally, often to the Army. When the hooves of the Pecos Valley animals went elsewhere, a huge cattle drive — comprising thousands of animals and more than one hundred men — changed the picture of the region for a substantial time. The conflicts of the region centered on this regime, with the renegade communities that preyed on Chisum and the conflict over control of a seemingly fixed economy that could grow no more after the range lands of the area were filled with cattle. In the aftermath of the railroad and the irrigation development, the changes that indicated a shift to an agricultural economy began in earnest. Water reclamation offered the possibility to divide land into the parcels of individual ownership. No longer could a cattleman own a water source and enjoy control over vast surrounding acreage. A canal or ditch could make that land bloom with the produce of a yeoman farmer. In effect, the institutions of industrial society fostered the illusion of personal independence that had become an American icon and myth. In the view of the late nineteenth century, the people who came to settle in this technologically transformed environment were an essential component of the backbone of virtuous democracy.

The genesis of communities in the region stemmed from the view of irrigation as a social panacea. The Pecos Irrigation and Investment Company sold dreams; the irrigable land it offered and the use of the railroad to bring people in and produce out made living in the region feasible in Anglo-American terms for immigrants and migrants. Promoters such as Charles Eddy talked little or not at all about the hardships that the military once faced in the region; they noted the Indian past, but disregarded it in the present. The trials and travails of explorers were the stories of myth, not of post-railroad, post-irrigation reality. With these technologies, the message explained, the Pecos Valley, once dry, sparsely inhabited, and distant, became no different from anywhere else.

Certainly after 1890, the organizational structure of the region mirrored that elsewhere in the country. Its patterns of ownership, especially the consolidation of the most valuable land in a few hands and its resale as irrigated land to newcomers, were typical of the rural West. So was

the ongoing strife between partners in the operation; first Garrett found himself on the outside, then Eddy and Hagerman quarreled, and a power struggle followed. Although Hagerman became the majority partner in both the railroad and the irrigation project, Eddy still owned the townsite. Two of the pillars of the transformed region often found that their objectives did not mesh. Hagerman regarded the irrigation project as part of a multistage network, in which national needs and concerns outweighed regional and local ones; Eddy saw himself as the local developer and placed the region's needs ahead of larger issues. Two different forms of industrial-era development coincided. Discord followed.<sup>35</sup>

The tension initially did not affect the irrigation project. The company constructed its first major dam project in the lower Pecos Valley beginning in 1889. The company hired separate contractors to build the three major features: the diversion dam, the flume across the river, and the canal. The most complex part of the operation was the large wooden flume, which was completed in March 1890. The diversion dam, built for irrigation with the kind of rockfill design typically employed in hydraulic mining, took longer. Eventually called the Avalon Dam, this structure impounded as much as one billion acre-feet of water in its six-mile-long reservoir. Locals marveled at the canal — forty-five feet wide at the bottom and seventy-feet wide at the top; one observer wrote that when full of water, the “tallest man in America could not wade [through] it.” Three and one-half miles below the head gates, the main canal divided into its eastern and western tributaries, carrying water to lands on both sides of the river as well as downstream.<sup>36</sup>

Despite planning and preparation, the new dam could not meet the needs of the growing area. Avalon Dam was too small to both maintain the reserve of water necessary for the canals and to provide sufficient water storage. In October 1892, shortly after the completion of the original system, a new project began upstream from Avalon Dam. Called McMillan Dam, the rockfill structure was projected to be 1,686 feet long and as much as fifty-one feet high; its total cost was to exceed \$175,000. After its completion, McMillan Dam held almost eight times the amount of water behind Avalon Dam, enough to supply the entire Pecos Valley canal system for seventy-two days.<sup>37</sup> The Avalon and McMillan dams were remarkable technical and social achievements in a region that fifteen years before had seen an outright war between two factions of Anglo-American newcomers trying to control the region's wealth. The dams proved that in spite of Chisum, Billy the Kid, and even the Mescaleros, the real power in the trans-Pecos now lay outside its rugged topography.

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<sup>35</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 32.

<sup>36</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 24-28.

<sup>37</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 39-42; n.a., *Eddy County New Mexico to 1891*, 24; Hayter, “The Early Economic Development of the Pecos River Valley of New Mexico and Texas, 1880-1900,” 75-76.

Charles Eddy's incessant promotions and the success of the initial irrigation project attracted settlers. To Europeans and Americans in other parts of the country, the trans-Pecos seemed another of the seemingly infinite locations to prosper in the American West. Climatic anomaly played into this perception. A number of very wet years followed 1890, creating the illusion of natural prosperity as well as that easily derived from irrigation. The valley appeared to be an outstanding location to grow grapes, peaches, apricots, plums, pears, and apples. Despite setbacks in a sugar beet project, the transformed area appeared to offer great potential. Hagerman recruited immigrants from as far away as Switzerland to farm. One group from the Canton of Vaud purchased land in the region before they arrived in 1891 and eventually formed one of the important cores of the Eddy community.<sup>38</sup>

During the early 1890s, the trans-Pecos seemed close to fulfilling a level of promise that only participants in the economic revolution of the nation could recognize. From paleo-people to the renegades of Seven Rivers, the region always seemed spare, even a zero-sum equation in which the gains of any group came at the expenses of another. Eddy, Hagerman, and their friends reinvented the area as a typically late nineteenth century location, a place of infinite promise where only hard work separated an immigrant or the poor from prosperity and the even-more important personal independence. Hagerman and his peers believed in a mythological America where virtuous work not only set people free but made them powerful and prominent and gave them the potential to endure. Even with irrigation, the Pecos Valley threatened to test the very basis of such assumptions.

Rainfall that the dams were supposed to augment provided the initial catalyst for questioning the viability of private irrigation in Pecos Valley. August 1893 brought extraordinary precipitation, and the water rose behind Avalon Dam. Finally, the water topped the dam, and soon after the structure gave way, creating an enormous wall of water that swept down the valley. The water drowned fields, inundated houses, and spread out in the lowest areas nearest to the river. It destroyed the dam and severely damaged the flume and the canal system, as well as the railroad.<sup>39</sup>

In the United States, 1893 was a dismal year. An economic downturn became the Panic of 1893, as British investors who owned much of the American railroad network sensed weakness and began to sell off their holdings. The failure of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad in a bankruptcy cost investors more than \$125 million and devastated an economy careening out of control. Extensive government silver purchases, mandated by the Silver

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<sup>38</sup> n.a., *Eddy County New Mexico to 1891*, 14, 18-19; *Carlsbad Current Argus*, "Pioneers Recall Beet Sugar Refinery of 1890s," March 19, 1950; Hayter, "The Early Economic Development of the Pecos River Valley of New Mexico and Texas, 1880-1900," 77.

<sup>39</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 42-43; n.a., *Eddy County New Mexico to 1891*, 13; Hayter, "The Early Economic Development of the Pecos River Valley of New Mexico and Texas, 1880-1900," 76.

Purchase Act, drained national gold reserves, and even a mammoth bailout by Eastern bankers could not raise federal assets in gold above the symbolic \$100 million mark. On June 27, 1893, the New York stock market crashed, plunging the nation into what would be a severe four-year depression.

As is typical in colonial economic situations, the peripheries were hit even harder than the core, and the American West was no exception. Much of the region's wealth during the 1890s derived from railroads and mining, in particular silver mining. These were the days of the silver mining center of Aspen, and of the Populists' alliance with silver mine owners in Nevada, Idaho, and other western states in an effort to secure less expensive capital for farmers in search of loans. Western assets vanished; even Hagerman, who made most of his money in the east and who had become by 1893 the leading financial backer on the Pecos Valley, suffered immensely. By the 1890s, his wealth mainly came from railroads and silver. During the crisis, he later remarked, his net worth declined by more than \$2.4 million in just one month.<sup>40</sup> As the rains fell and decimated the Avalon Dam, the national economic power that supported the entire valley also faced inundation.

Despite his depleted capital, Hagerman stood in the breach. Faced with the imminent departure of many area farmers, he promised to finance the dam's rebuilding at his own expense. The more than \$150,000 he invested became his last major financial contribution to the Pecos Valley. Early in 1894, the rebuilding project ended with a slightly bigger and higher Avalon Dam. Hagerman's bold gesture inspired confidence, for if a man with such wealth and commitment — represented by his personal funds — still believed in the region, others could not reasonably give up their own faith. Hagerman's gesture shored up lagging confidence, but it only slowed a pattern of decline.

The dam failure served as a catalyst for other problems with irrigated agriculture in the trans-Pecos. Hagerman's investment of the additional \$150,000 smacked of the old adage, "throwing good money after bad." Farming in the Pecos Valley remained as much a dream as a viable reality. Many in the valley tried to grow specialized perishables for which better markets existed east and north of the region; Hagerman's railroad connected the area only to Texas and the West, where produce demand was lower. The long train rides and the constant jostling damaged some of the valley's exports on the way to market. Although Hagerman solved the problem of long train rides by financing another spur to Amarillo, Texas, he could do little about drought, dust, and other impediments to agriculture.<sup>41</sup>

Although the spur reached Roswell in 1894, its cost pressured Hagerman's depleted

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<sup>40</sup> Robert W. Larson, *New Mexico Populism: A Study of Radical Protest in a Western Territory* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1974); Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 43-44; n.a., *Eddy County New Mexico to 1981*, 24; Hayter, "The Early Economic Development of the Pecos River Valley of New Mexico and Texas, 1880-1900," 73.

resources, and by 1896, creditors placed the railroad in receivership. Hagerman's Texas & Pacific branch from Pecos reorganized as the Pecos Valley and Northwestern. It built north and east through Roswell and eventually toward Amarillo. As it did elsewhere in the West, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe came in on the heels of local collapse and purchased the rail system. In this case, Hagerman felt relief as the AT&SF completed his construction; by 1901, the railroad also owned the remainder of his interests.<sup>42</sup> The conditions of the valley and a national financial crisis combined to drain the resources of a proud and sophisticated industrial capitalist. The trans-Pecos region retained its irascible hostility to human endeavor.

The Pecos Irrigation and Improvement Company fared no better. The needs of the canal system and the recruitment of new farmers to purchase the water drained company coffers, and a decline followed. Even the introduction of new crops failed to slow the company's end. Land speculation within irrigated areas worsened local economic conditions, driving prices up and changing the crops grown as farmers had to earn more to pay their mortgages. As occurred with most of the private irrigation companies in the West, this one went bankrupt. With cash short and problems mounting, Hagerman issued an ultimatum to his Swiss investors and the other bondholders as 1897 ended. If they did not increase their investment, neither would he and his partners. In a complicated financial arrangement that engendered ill feelings and put the entire investment at risk, the company reorganized in 1898 as the Pecos Irrigation Company with more than \$1.7 million of unsecured capital. Hagerman gradually pulled out of the lower Pecos, focusing his considerable energies on the Roswell area. Although the bondholders filed lawsuits, the reorganization took effect February 1, 1901, ending the initial irrigation regime in the trans-Pecos.<sup>43</sup>

By 1900, the entrepreneurial Hagerman lost a fortune, as had most of the principals of the various companies. Garrett had been forced out of leadership first, and Eddy fought with Hagerman and departed to a successful career as a railroad and corporate entrepreneur elsewhere in New Mexico and the West. The town that bore his name changed its title to "Carlsbad" in 1899. Other investors fell by the wayside. Hagerman absorbed most of the financial damage; as the controlling influence he risked the most, stood to gain the most, and paid the highest economic price. Although the entire trans-Pecos irrigation and railroad endeavors during the 1880s and 1890s may have been ill-advised from the start, Hagerman pointed to more tangible factors in their demise. He regarded shoddy dam construction and

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<sup>42</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 43-45; n.a., *Eddy County New Mexico to 1981*, 13; Hayter, "The Early Economic Development of the Pecos River Valley of New Mexico and Texas, 1880-1900," 80-81; for a description of the AT&SF's practices, see Hal Rothman, "Selling the Meaning of Place: Tourism, Entrepreneurship, and Community Structure in the Twentieth-Century American West," *Pacific Historical Review*.

<sup>43</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 43-49; n.a., *Eddy County New Mexico to 1981*, 124-25; Hayter, "The Early Economic Development of the Pecos River Valley of New Mexico and Texas, 1880-1900," 79.

untrained engineers, poor financial management, the region's inherent agricultural limitations, and a lack of efficient transportation as the catalysts.<sup>44</sup> Hagerman's perspective contained merit. Only after 1898, with the new rail link to Roswell and Amarillo, could goods from Eddy County easily reach the huge markets of the Midwest and East; the initial dam construction was haphazard, financial management remained slipshod, and the agricultural limitations of the region were genuine. Combined with nationwide economic conditions after 1893, the national confidence in industrial power as a transformative factor for all regions helped Hagerman and his partners overreach even the technologically enhanced capabilities of the trans-Pecos.

Hagerman's financial losses illustrated the ongoing issue of the Guadalupe Mountains and the trans-Pecos. Even with the advantages of industrial technology and access, however limited, to the national market, the region remained difficult to harness in any consistent manner. Capital infusions helped, but aspirations that exceeded even the valley's enhanced capabilities doomed participants to expensive failure. Their inability to see the actual region — a semiarid place possessed of poor and rocky soil, with precipitation patterns that fluctuated greatly, and far from any core area even on railroad tracks — and their overwhelming faith that nothing could stand in the way of American industrial progress meant that many of the late-nineteenth century entrepreneurs never really accepted the trans-Pecos for what it was.

In a semiarid region, the application of industrial technologies, especially the railroad and corporate irrigation, made development feasible but failed to secure the success of individual companies. These technologies and the market economy ended the historic pattern of following the river courses to pass through the region. Instead of circumventing the region as had nearly all predecessors, Anglo-American industrial technologies and market conditions made sedentary habitation possible. Encouraged by the ebullient promoter, Charles B. Eddy, a community grew up along the Pecos River that served as a center for the region. The town of Eddy, now Carlsbad, created a different kind of staying power that superseded even the technological strategies of the era.

As Carlsbad became established, it changed the direction of local and regional culture. Since before the days of Seven Rivers, the region tolerated a wide-open tradition that condoned extralegal and often illegal activity. The tension among Anglos that culminated in the Lincoln County War attested to the personal way that regional disputes usually ended. By 1900, the psychic and cultural room for the outlaw behavior of the era largely disappeared, except where codified in law such as in Phenix, adjacent to the town of Eddy. There the practice of vice, forbidden in Eddy proper, took place in an officially sanctioned manner. Instead, Eddy, a city with aspirations, a center for the region, took shape and grew.

These links to the market economy came at a price. A community was only as valuable as its resources and only as important as its infrastructure. Especially in the peripheries of the semiarid world, the arrival of market goods and technologies had the potential to create

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<sup>44</sup> Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 47-48.

dependency on the outside. Instead of devising home-grown economic strategies that would sustain the region through lean times as well as more successful ones, the region looked to the national market for sustenance. On one level, this predilection accounted for the failure of various economic strategies; on another, it also explained the successes of the region when they occurred. In Eddy and throughout the Guadalupe Mountains and the trans-Pecos region, the tenuous relationship between the region and the outside world became a dominant feature of regional economic life. The result was a turn to federal support, first in irrigation, where public money soon replaced the private funding of the Hagerman era, later with the establishment of the Carlsbad Cave National Monument.